

## **PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES IN PUNJAB**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Public Distribution System (PDS) is poverty alleviation program and a direct state intervention to ensure regular supply of essential consumer goods at cheap and subsidized prices to deprived section so as to insulate them from impact of rising prices of these goods and maintain the minimum nutritional status of population. PDS is functioning quite efficiently under the joint coordination of both the Central and the State Government from last five decades and Government of India is spending a huge amount of money on this system to achieve food security. Punjab government started its own Atta Dal Scheme under PDS program and NFSA (National Food Security) Act covering more than half of its population to provide food supplies to the BPL households at subsidized rates. However, very often PDS is being criticized for its inefficiency to distributed the adequate and better quality goods to targeted strata of society. The performance of Public Distribution System (PDS) depends on its reach and potential to serve this deprived sections with entitled food commodities at affordable prices on regular basis. Thus, the present study measured the public distribution of essential commodities in Punjab by check out the different types of ration cards and ration commodities and analyze the responses given by the respondents of this study, about their satisfaction with quality, price and quantity of these commodities distributed under the Public Distribution System.*

**Key words:** National Food Security Act, Consumer satisfaction, Atta Dal Scheme, Public Distribution System, Below Poverty Line

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

India has one of the largest number of food schemes in the world to ensure food security. To remove the hunger and meet the basic food requirements of the poor, the Public Distribution System (PDS) is a direct state intervention in national distribution system of goods that ensure food security through timely and affordable distribution of food grains to sections of population that live below the poverty line, cannot afford to pay market prices for their food. Every year the government is spending huge sum for the attainment of food security and thus, terms like Food Security Bill and food subsidies have become very common. In the year of 2010-11 and 2011-12, the Central Government released Rs. 62,929 and Rs. 72,370 Crore respectively in relevance to food subsidies. However, Government expenditure on the food subsidy raised to Rs. 113,171 Crore during 2014-15 but declined to Rs. 105,509.41 in 2015-16. The total count of fair price shops evaluated by the State Governments and the UTs up to 2011 was 5,05,879 to distribute the necessary commodities and 16.67 percent of poor's total per capita consumption has been covered under Public Distribution System Program. The major food producing states of Punjab 27 percent and Haryana 18 percent lagged behind in PDS coverage but maximum percentage of leakage was reported in these two states during 2005-12. To provide advancement and reformation to the Public Distribution System, the National Food Security Act (NFSA) was passed by the Government on 10<sup>th</sup> Sept'2013 with the intention to facilitate the people with nutritional safety and make food available to them at subsidized price, thus guaranteeing access to satisfactory quantity of quality food to the vulnerable section of the population. The percentage of population covered by NFSA (National Food Security Act) in the states of Punjab is 50.90 percent. Even the state provides some of the highest shares of food grains production to the country. It has made a remarkable increase in the production levels from merely 7.23 Million Tons in 1964-65 to nearly 30.33 Million Tons in 1995-96.

The well-organized wholesale and distributive process of food commodities through an active network of FPS automates the Public Distribution System within the Punjab state. The sell and purchase made are supervised by the Punjab Civil Supplies Corporation, however the functioning of FPS together with a fair distribution is regularly checked and inspected by the Department of Food and Civil Supplies. The program of TPDS (Targeted Public Distribution System) was initiated and introduced all across the nation by the Government of India in June'1997. During 2011-12, approximately 2,88,600 BPL households were benefitted and allotted wheat under the TPDS program at the scale of 35 Kg per month to each family at the rate of Rs. 4.54 for each Kg. However, during the same period, wheat was distributed to 1,79,400 targeted families under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) Scheme at the scale of 35 kg per month to each family at the rate of Rs. 2.00 for each kg. and 35 kg. per month at the rate of Rs.6.23 for each kg. by the Department of Food & Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Punjab. The process of lifting and transport of food grains from the FCI to the Fair Price or Ration Shops is performed by the State Agency named Punsup. Moreover, to lend assistance and further facilitate the distribution process in Punjab, the Atta Dal Scheme was launched by the State Government in Aug 2007 with the estimated budget of 250 crore. Nearly, 12.95 Lac families were facilitated through this scheme and supplied with Wheat and Dal at an affordable price of Rs. 4 and Rs.25 respectively per Kg. Wheat is distributed at an average scale of 5 Kg per member and maximum of 25 Kg can be allotted to a family. Whereas, the maximum limit assigned for pulses distribution for each family is 2.5 Kg or each person within a family owns a right to obtain at least 0.5 Kg pulses. Punjab owned a total of 14348 Fair Price Shops in 2011 and during 2015, these were increased up to 16865 which provided ration to nearly 2891933 ration holders. Whereas, in 2017, the total strength of Fair Price Shops in Punjab is around 19705 which distribute essential commodities to around

7421755 households. The following table explains the budget allocation, expenditure and distribution under the ADS.

**Table 1** Budget allotment, expenditure and Distribution of Wheat under Atta Dal Scheme of Punjab

Year	Budget Allotment (Amount in Crores)	Total Expenditure	Total number of Beneficiaries (in lacs)	Total Distribution of Food grains under Atta Dal Scheme (Tons) Figures in MTs	
				Wheat	Pulses
2007-08	250 crore	31.25 crore	12.95	282964	33760
2008-09	300 crore	70.00 crore	12.95	420716	49599
2009-10	300 crore	Nil	14.51	384010	41951
2010-11	350 crore	Nil	14.51	345362	23707
2011-12	350 crore	147.40 crore	15.41	360123	27874
2012-13	700 crore	220.00 crore	15.41	326187	8975
2013-14	400 crore	330.00 crore	15.41	234621	15713
2014-15	133 crore	120.00 crore	30.9	----	-----
2015-16	400 crore	70.00 crore	27.4	----	-----
2016-17	700 crore	Nil	28.9	----	-----

Source: Department of Food and Civil supplies, Punjab

The statistical data of Atta Dal Scheme within the state of Punjab during 2007 to 2017 is provided in the above table. During 2007-08, the budget of Rs. 250 Crore was assigned to the scheme and 31.25 crore was utilized to covered 12.9 percent beneficiaries whereas Rs.300 Crore budget was framed for carrying out the allocation activities under the Atta Dal Scheme during 2008-09 and total expenditure was 70 crore. Furthermore, during 2014-15 and 2015-16, the budgetary allocation was around Rs. 133 Crore and Rs. 400 Crore respectively which facilitated 30.9 percent households in the former period whereas the later tenure benefitted 27.4 percent beneficiaries with the expenditure of 120 crore and 70 crore respectively. The budget of Rs. 700 Crore is designed for the current session of 2016-17 which aims to cover 28.9 percent targeted households. Under this scheme, each person can avail a minimum of 5 Kg wheat at Rs. 4 per Kg whereas the rate of pulses fixed by the state government is Rs. 30 per Kg. During 2007-08, the State Government distributed 282964 MT wheat and 33760 MT pulses and during 2011-12, the total weight of wheat and pulses was around 360123 MT and 27874 MT respectively through Fair price shops to distributed among the beneficiaries under Atta Dal scheme. In 2013-14, the total weight of wheat and pulses was 234621 MT and 15713MT respectively. The present study deals with satisfaction level of consumers regarding the public distribution of essential commodities in the Sangrur, Mansa and Mohali districts of Punjab. The empirical findings of this study would check the different types of ration cards and ration commodities and would also check the price, quality and quantity of theses commodities distributed under the public distribution system.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A numbers of studies have been done on PDS in India. The past studies were required to understanding the research problem and in carrying out the formulated work. Hence various research studies related to the Public distribution system are as following:

Sharma Anuradha (1997) presented detailed study of the organizational management system of PDS along with Fair Price Shops functional in the Jammu province of Jammu and Kashmir. The research explicated the main characteristics of PDS including the efficiency it holds within the rural region, FPS execution system, the customers' opinion along with the

functional nature of distribution scheme both at the Central as well as at the State Level. The findings checked up the precision attained between the promises given and the reality achieved by the PDS, and further demonstrated certain measures to provide confrontation to all the drawbacks encountered.

Raj Kumar Grover (1998) performed the cost-benefit analysis of PDS all across India with special focus on Haryana under his research study “Public Distribution System- a Socio Economic Analysis”. The research presented the impact of food subsidy on open market price and an in depth investigation has been made on the profitability of Fair Price Shops. Socio-economic status and the obstacles encountered by the FPS owners and the ration card holders have also been highlighted. Remedies of the problems and strategies to make the PDS more efficient were presented by means of these findings.

Jharwal S.M (1999) conducted the research under the title “Public Distribution System in India- Reassessed” in which the origin, the route and the evolution of PDS all across India was traced and mainly the major beneficiary states have been considered to capture the impact of PDS. An attempt has been made to provide a quantitative assessment of the benefits from public distribution system to people of deprived communities, both in terms of earnings and food access and impact of PDS on market prices also. The study further remarked that serious supervision summed with close monitoring can result in creation of an effective PDS. It was also observed that the priority assigned to the PDS by the district administration was one of the most important determinants for operating PDS efficiently. The experience of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Kerala provide enough evidence to support this view.

Narwal Sujata (2001) investigated the structural framework of PDS along with its management and execution in the state of Haryana in her thesis “Management of Public Distribution System”. She questioned the consumers and the identified beneficiaries in reference to their self-contentment or whether the current system of distribution proved satisfactory on their part and they were satisfied. It further, highlighted the flaws and the errors within the present PDS programme and stressed on the need to repair such defects, since PDS can serve as a boon for the penniless and essentially help them to deduct their sufferings. She addressed the need to grant subsidies on the food commodities only at levels that can be sustained both by the government and the nation, and lend an effective hand to the poor households in a genuine manner.

Pathania Kulwant Singh (2005) enquired both the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of PDS administration within the state of Himachal Pradesh under his study named as “Public Distribution System, Status, Challenges and Remedial Strategies”. He revealed that the ratio of BPL families within the region was higher than 70 percent, thus, the deprived class were unable to meet their basic needs of life. Black-marketing, hoarding and inflation practices further served as a bane for the destitute class and made their life more miserable and troubled. Therefore, he requested the governmental policies and the administrative class to acquire strict attitude and take serious steps towards the abolition of these malpractices and suggested the launch of mobile FPS in the remote areas so as to successfully cater the needs of the needy class.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

1. To examine the different types of ration cards and ration commodities distributed under the Public Distribution system in selected districts of Punjab.
2. To analyze the quality, price and quantity of food grains supplied to the people by Govt under Public Distribution system in selected districts of Punjab.

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

The Present study is empirical in nature and has been studied by using primary and secondary data. Survey method was followed for this study. The current study was confined to state of Punjab, an agricultural state in Northwest India. Punjab is situated in north-west of India and has an area of 50,362 km<sup>2</sup>. According to 2011 census, the population of Punjab is 27,704,236 and literacy rate is 76.70 percent. According to 2011 census, Mansa district has a population of 7,68,808 and a literacy rate of 62.8 percent. Whereas Mohali and Sangrur districts have the population of 986,147 and 16,54,408. The literacy rate of Mohali, Mansa and Sangrur is 84.9, 62.8 percent and 69.95 percent respectively. Multistage cluster sampling was used to select three districts (Sangrur, Mansa and Mohali) of Punjab. These three blocks from three districts were selected from the alluvial plains, sandy areas and hilly sub-mountainous region respectively for this study. For collecting data, the 910 consumers were selected from these three districts by select three blocks from each district by using random sampling.

##### 4.1. Field Survey

1. To examine the different types of ration cards and ration commodities distributed under Public Distribution System: This section discuss the different types of ration cards to purchase the entitled quantity of wheat, dal and kerosene. Different types of ration cards are provided different ration commodities.

a) Type of ration cards -wise Distribution of Respondents

**Table 2** Type of ration cards

Type of ration cards/ Region		District						Total		
		Mansa		Sangrur		Mohali				
		Geographical Region		Geographical Region		Geographical Region		Geographical Region		
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Total
APL	No.	2	20	27	22	20	39	49	81	130
	Percent	0.5	4.0	6.5	4.4	4.8	7.9	11.8	16.4	14.3
BPL	No.	19	38	44	16	0	1	63	55	118
	Percent	4.6	7.7	10.6	3.2	0.0	0.2	15.2	11.1	13.0
Antyodaya	No.	11	12	7	5	0	2	18	19	37
	Percent	2.7	2.4	1.7	1.0	0.0	0.4	4.3	3.8	4.1
Blue Card	No.	115	76	51	83	86	114	252	273	525
	Percent	27.7	15.4	12.3	16.8	20.7	23.0	60.7	55.2	57.7
BPL+Blue Card	No.	3	11	16	15	0	0	19	26	45
	Percent	0.7	2.2	3.9	3.0	0.0	0.0	4.6	5.3	4.9
AAY+Blue cards	No.	0	2	2	8	0	0	2	10	12
	Percent	0.0	0.4	0.5	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.5	2.0	1.3
APL+Blue cards	No.	6	28	6	3	0	0	12	31	43
	Percent	1.4	5.7	1.4	0.6	0.0	0.0	2.9	6.3	4.7
Total	No.	156	187	153	152	106	156	415	495	910
	Percent	37.6	37.8	36.9	30.7	25.5	31.5	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Field survey 2013-14

It is evident from the above table that 525 (57.7 percent) ration cards were blue cards and 130 (14.3 percent) ration cards were APL cards which was followed by 118 (13 percent ) BPL

ration cards whereas 4.9, 4.7, 4.1 and 1.3 percent ration cards were BPL+BLUE Cards, APL+ Blue cards , Antyodaya and AAY+ Blue cards respectively.

b) Types of ration commodities distributed under Public Distribution System

**Table 3** Commodities mainly distributed by FPS

Commodities/ Region	Rural	Urban	Total
Wheat	100 (37.0)	170 (34.34)	270 (29.67)
Wheat, Kerosene	33 (54.1)	28 (5.65)	61 (6.70)
Wheat, Kerosene, Dal	181 (72.7)	68 (13.74)	249 (27.36)
Wheat, Dal	55 (25.1)	164 (33.13)	219 (24.06)
Nothing	46 (41.8)	65 (13.13)	111 (12.19)
Total	415 (100.0)	495 (100.0)	910 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey

**Note:** Figures in parentheses indicate percentages of dealers of Fair Price Shops.

The value of chi-square  $X^2 = 121.945$

The table value at 5 percent  $t_{0.05} = 11.07$  with (d.f) degree of freedom = 5

The above table indicates that on the whole, nearly 270 respondents (29.67 percent) which constitute 100 (37.0 percent) respondents out of total 415 respondents of rural areas and 170 (34.34 percent) respondents out of total 495 respondents from the urban areas were purchasing only wheat from FPS. 61 respondents (6.70 percent) which constitute 33 (54.1 percent) respondents from rural areas and 28 (5.65 percent) respondents from urban areas were purchasing wheat and kerosene. While 249 respondents (27.36 percent) which constitute 181 respondents (72.7 percent) from rural areas and 68 respondents (13.74 percent) from urban areas were getting wheat, kerosene and dal. 219 respondents (24.06) which constitute 55 (25.1 percent) of rural respondents and 164 (33.13 percent) of urban respondents were purchasing wheat and Dal. 111 respondents (12.19 percent) which constitute 46 (41.8 percent) respondents from rural areas and 65 (13.13 percent) respondents from urban areas were purchasing nothing from FPS. While calculating  $\chi^2$  value from the data to find out the significant difference in the opinion of consumers of urban and rural areas regarding the purchasing the commodities from FPS. It was revealed that the calculated value (121.945) was more than the table value (11.07) at 5 percent level of significance. Hence the alternative hypothesis was accepted and null hypothesis was rejected, which represents that there was a significant difference between the views of consumers belonging to urban and rural areas so far the purchasing the commodities from FPS is concerned.

2. Examine the price, quality and adequacy of goods: This section explains the perception of consumers about the price, quality and quantity of ration commodities i.e wheat, pulses and kerosene, distribute by the dealers of Fair Price Shops.

a) Price charged by the FPSs: In the competitive market, every seller charges minimum profit from its customer and keep the selling price to minimum possible rates to attract more and more consumers and on the other hand, the consumers prefer to purchase goods from the shop charge at minimum prices. Therefore, reasonable pricing is very important in the

present. An attempt has been made in this part of the study, to judge the consumers aptitude towards price charged by FPS.

**Table 4** Price charged by the FPSs

Price Charged		Respondents from Rural area			Respondents from Urban area		
Response of consumers	Ranks	Wheat	Pulses	Kerosene	Wheat	Pulses	Kerosene
High Rate	1	35 (8.43)	40 (9.64)	45 (10.84)	61 (12.32)	68 (13.73)	75 (15.15)
More than the open market	2	68 (16.38)	75 (18.07)	79 (19.04)	115 (23.23)	121 (24.45)	123 (24.85)
Reasonable	3	62 (14.94)	60 (14.46)	72 (17.35)	95 (19.19)	92 (18.58)	95 (19.19)
Cheap	4	223 (53.73)	210 (50.60)	202 (48.67)	208 (42.02)	202 (42.23)	202 (40.81)
Very Cheap	5	27 (6.51)	30 (7.23)	17 (4.10)	16 (3.24)	5 (1.01)	0 (0.0)
Total		415 (100)	415 (100)	415 (100)	495 (100)	495 (100)	495 (100)
Weighted Average Score		3.334	3.277	3.161	3.00	2.867	2.856
Rank		1	2	3	1	2	3

Source: Primary Data

**Note:** Figures in parentheses indicate percentages of consumers of Fair Price Shops.

Data in above table also indicates the response of PDS consumers about the price charged by FPS dealers. The table reveals that majority of respondents 53.73, 50.60 percent from rural area and 42.02, 42.23 percent from urban area had viewed that wheat and pulses were available at cheap prices in the FPS. From the rural area, in the reasonable price category, 14.94 percent were recorded for wheat, 14.46 percent were noted for pulses and 17.35 percent had viewed for availability of kerosene oil were reasonable price in the FPS. On the other hand, in the same category of reasonable price in the urban area, 19.19 percent respondents were recorded for wheat and 18.58 percent for pulses and 19.19 percent respondents for kerosene oil were noted. 8.43 percent, 9.64 percent and 10.84 percent respondents had viewed that wheat, pulses and kerosene were available at high price in the rural area and 12.32 percent, 13.73 and 15.15 percent respondents had noted that wheat, pulses and kerosene oil were available at high price in the urban area respectively. It was observed that in both rural and urban areas under study, the respondents were satisfied with cheap rate of “wheat” charged by FPS as its weighted average score was the highest. While the other commodities pulses and kerosene acquired 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> rank in the order.

b) Quality of PDS Goods: Quality of goods is very important for the satisfaction of the consumers. In the present competitive world, every consumer wants better quality products at a cheaper rate. Therefore, an attempt has been made to find out the perception of consumers in respect to the quality of products providing by the FPS.

**Table 5** Quality of PDS goods

Quality of PDS Goods		Respondents from Rural area			Respondents from Urban area		
		Wheat	Pulses	Kerosene	Wheat	Pulses	Kerosene
Very Good	1	15 (3.62)	17 (4.10)	19 (4.58)	5 (1.02)	3 (0.60)	6 (1.22)
Good	2	61 (14.70)	65 (15.66)	68 (16.38)	86 (17.37)	94 (18.98)	98 (19.79)
Average	3	60 (14.46)	62 (14.94)	67 (16.14)	89 (17.98)	91 (18.38)	96 (19.39)
Bad	4	182 (43.85)	178 (42.89)	173 (41.69)	155 (31.31)	151 (30.50)	144 (29.09)
Very Bad	5	97 (23.37)	93 (22.41)	88 (21.20)	160 (32.32)	156 (31.51)	151 (30.50)
Total		415 (100)	415 (100)	415 (100)	495 (100)	495 (100)	495 (100)
Weighted Average Score		3.68	3.638	3.58	3.76	3.734	3.719
Rank		1	2	3	1	2	3

Source: Field Survey

**Note:** Figures in parentheses indicate percentages of consumers of Fair Price Shops

The table indicates that majority of respondents, 43.85 percent respondents of rural areas and 31.31 percent respondents of urban areas were found dissatisfied with the quality of wheat available at FPSs. 42.89 percent, 41.69 percent respondents from rural areas and 30.50 percent, 29.09 percent respondents had respectively viewed that the quality of pulses and kerosene oil is bad to use. 23.37 percent, 22.41 percent and 21.20 percent rural respondents had explained that the quality of wheat, pulses and kerosene oil respectively, was very bad. On the other hand, in the urban area, 32.32 percent, 31.51 percent and 30.50 percent urban respondents were highly dissatisfied with the quality of wheat, pulses and kerosene oil respectively. 4.10 percent rural respondents and 0.60 urban respondents were very satisfy with the quality of pulses in the FPSs. It was observed that in both rural and urban areas under study, the respondents were totally dissatisfied with bad quality of “wheat” distributed by FPS as its weighted average score was the highest. While the other commodities pulses and kerosene acquired 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> rank in the order.

c) Quantity of PDS Goods: ‘T’- Test of significance of Predictor Variables between issued and expected quantity of wheat, pulses and kerosene supplied to PDS consumers. Test of significance based on ‘t’ statistical test has been performed to compare the mean performance of issued and expected quantities. The value of ‘t’ is calculated from sample data and then compared with its table value based on ‘t’ distribution at a specific level of significance for different degree of freedom to measure the mean difference of predictor variables belonging to issued and expected quantity of ration items.



**Table 6** Quantity of PDS goods

Variable	Classified group	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Standard Error Mean	T value	Df	Sig. 2 tailed
Quantity of Wheat	Issued	24.0292	8.41350	.29372	59.702	835	.000
	Expected	38.4528	6.36522				
	Gap	17.5359	8.49261				
Quantity of Pulses	Issued	2.0000	.06796	.03425	91.488	836	0.000
	Expected	4.0000	0.00000				
	Gap	3.1338	.99100				
Quantity of Kerosene	Issued	4.9377	1.24844	.07759	109.783	836	0.000
	Expected	10.0000	0.00000				
	Gap	8.5185	2.24487				

Source: Field Survey

The above shows that ‘t’ test had been applied to three predictor variables namely gap in the quantity of wheat, pulses and kerosene supplied to PDS consumers. Among all these three variables ‘t’ test was highly significant in respect of gap in the quantity of wheat, pulses and kerosene. It shows that there were significant differences in the issued and expected quantity of wheat, pulses and kerosene.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The Government of Punjab is also making all efforts to make the PDS more effective by ensuring the availability of good quality of ration commodities at subsidized price to the poor in Punjab state. The present study analyzing the functioning of public distribution system to check the distribution of essential commodities in three district Mansa, Sangrur and Mohali of Punjab in term of quantity, quality and price of commodities. It was observed that in both rural and urban areas under study, the respondents were satisfied with cheap rate of “wheat” charged by FPS rather than the prices of the other commodities pulses and kerosene. It was observed that in both rural and urban areas under study, the respondents were totally dissatisfied with bad quality of wheat and pulses distributed by FPS. To check the gap between the issued and expected quantity of wheat, pulses and kerosene, it is concluded that among all these three variables, there were significant differences in the issued and expected quantity of wheat, pulses and kerosene. It is also evident that maximum ration cards were blue cards, followed by APL cards and BPL ration cards. Majority of people purchase wheat only and another majority of people purchase wheat, dal, kerosene and wheat, dal from the fair price shops respectively and it is concluded that there was a significant difference between the views of consumers belonging to urban and rural areas. It is suggested that the government should appoint some officials to make an inspection on the quality of food grains at the time of procurement, during the transportation of items from the warehouses to the Fair Price Shops and later distribute them to the consumers after a detailed check up. The quantity allotted by the Food supply department should be adequate for each items and quantity of food grains distributed by the FPS dealers per households per period should be increased to minimize the gap between requirement and distributed of items.

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